

NEWS from



Bill Postmus
Supervisor, 1st District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 15, 2002

Contact: Brad Mitzelfelt
(909) 387-4830

SUPERVISORS APPROVE CONTRACT FOR HESPERIA JUVENILE ASSESSMENT/PLACEMENT FACILITY

SAN BERNARDINO—The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today unanimously approved a 10-year, \$48-million contract with a private company to provide a new, 144-bed private placement and assessment facility in Hesperia for juvenile court wards.

The construction project will be fully financed by Arizona-based VisionQuest International, Inc. The contract is expected to result in \$9.6 million in annual revenues for the Hesperia facility, half of which will be paid by the County in the form of per-youth fees for 72 to 144 wards on an on-going basis. More than half of the County's share will be reimbursed by state and federal funds.

First District Supervisor Bill Postmus said he supported bringing the project to the City of Hesperia not only because of the County's pressing need for juvenile placement beds, but also for the economic benefits that will result from the construction of the facility and its \$5-million payroll employing more than 150 people.

"This is a good deal for San Bernardino County and the City of Hesperia," Postmus said. "It creates more than 150 private-sector jobs and pumps more than \$9 million per year into our local economy. Also, by having a private company finance and build the facility, the taxpayers save up-front costs. And by using this type of placement, we become eligible for federal Foster-Care funds to defray much of the costs."

The placement facility was originally envisioned as part of a "Suitability Plan" that was approved by the Board of Supervisors in December 2000 and later approved by the

-MORE-

VISION QUEST 2-2-2-2

State Board of Corrections to reduce the County's juvenile hall overcrowding problem and reach compliance with State standards.

The Plan included a recently opened 100-bed "Tent Annex" adjacent to Central Juvenile Hall in San Bernardino as well as a plan to identify a private provider to operate a facility to treat up to 150 of the court wards in Juvenile Hall awaiting placement. The Plan was intended to help reduce overcrowding pending completion of the West Valley Juvenile Hall in 2003 and the subsequent completion of a new 200-bed High Desert Juvenile Hall in Apple Valley and an additional expansion of 240 beds in San Bernardino.

The Board of Supervisors in May 2001 approved plans for an 89-acre site at the southeast corner of Dale Evans Parkway and Morro Road in the Town of Apple Valley as the location for the High Desert juvenile hall. The County plans to break ground at the Apple Valley site during the first half of 2002.

On September 26, 2000, the Board of Supervisors approved the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a private placement facility. Two proposals were received. The county's evaluation committee unanimously recommended acceptance of the Vision Quest proposal. The Probation Department had previously placed youth at VisionQuest facilities out of state and reported that it had been satisfied with the service.

The agreement approved today is contingent upon VisionQuest entering into an agreement with a county-approved educational provider. The County Superintendent of Schools has agreed in principle to provide educational services. VisionQuest also must enter into an agreement with San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health for mental health services. Vision Quest also must commence construction within 12 months of signing a contract with the Board of Supervisors.

Supervisor Postmus said the VisionQuest facility is badly needed.

"Our County's Juvenile Hall population has averaged almost double its capacity in recent years," he said. "This facility is an important element in our plan to reduce overcrowding in our juvenile hall population." Postmus cited an independent analysis by the County's Administrative Office which showed that over the past 20 months there have been sufficient placements to cover more than twice the number the VisionQuest contract calls for.

Added Postmus: "I'm also gratified that the High Desert once again is helping solve this countywide problem and that our local communities--in Apple Valley with the Juvenile Hall and now in Hesperia with the VisionQuest facility--will see increased economic activity and hundreds of new jobs as a result."